

"WEDU INTERVIEW: PAULA KERGER"

FEBRUARY 2008

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>> THIS SPECIAL PRESENTATION WAS PRODUCED IN HIGH DEFINITION BY WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>>Rob Lorei: COMING UP NEXT, SHE'S THE HEAD OF THE NATIONAL GROUP WHICH FUNDS AND DISTRIBUTES PROGRAMMING TO THE 348 INDEPENDENT PUBLIC TELEVISION STATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. AFTER TWO YEARS ON THE JOB, SHE SHARES HER EXPERIENCES AND WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR PUBLIC TV.

THE PRESIDENT OF PBS, PAULA KERGER, JOINS US NEXT ON "WEDU INTERVIEW."

>>Rob Lorei: PAULA KERGER WAS SELECTED UNANIMOUSLY TO BE BECOME THE SIXTH PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE IN JANUARY OF 2006. HER APPOINTMENT WAS HERALDED BY MANY AS A WELCOME CHANGE BY CHOOSING A LEADER WHO CAME FROM WITHIN THE PBS FAMILY RATHER THAN FROM AN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION LIKE MANY OF HER PREDECESSORS DID. PAULA, WELCOME TO WEDU.

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>>Paula Kerger: WELCOME.

IT'S WONDERFUL TO BE HERE.

>>Rob Lorei: GOOD TO HAVE YOU HERE.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR TENURE.

YOU WERE SELECTED JUST AS THERE WAS A MAJOR CONTROVERSY IN THE COUNTRY ABOUT THE ALLEGED LIBERAL BIAS OF PUBLIC TELEVISION.

HOW DID THAT RESOLVE ITSELF?

>>Paula Kerger: WELL, I THINK IT RESOLVED ITSELF BECAUSE THE TRUTH PLAYED OUT.

I THINK THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME THAT HAD ACCUSED PUBLIC BROADCASTING OF BEING TOO LIBERAL, BUT I THINK THAT AS AMERICANS REALLY LOOK AT THE WORK THAT WE PRODUCE AND THAT WE BRING FORWARD, THE STORIES THAT WE COVER, THEY RECOGNIZE THE TRUTH, WHICH IS WE WORK VERY HARD TO MAKE SURE THAT MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEW ARE SHARED.

AND, YOU KNOW, EVERY YEAR THE ROPER ORGANIZATION DOES A POLL OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING FOR THE LAST, I THINK, FOUR OR FIVE YEARS THEY HAVE DONE THIS POLL.

AND IN IT, WE ARE PERCEIVED BY THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AS THE MOST TRUSTED OF ORGANIZATION, ABOVE COURTS OF LAW AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

I DON'T KNOW THAT THAT'S SETTING THE BAR TREMENDOUSLY HIGH, BUT I THINK THAT IT DOES ACTUALLY REPRESENT WHERE WE ARE IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF AMERICANS, WHICH IS AN ORGANIZATION

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THAT IS COMMITTED TO TRUTH, THAT IS COMMITTED TO FAIRNESS,
THAT IS COMMITTED TO AUTHENTICITY, AND THAT IS COMMITTED TO
TELLING AMERICA'S STORY.

>>Rob Lorei: I THINK A LOT OF THOSE COMPLAINTS BY PEOPLE WHO
ARE CONSERVATIVE WERE ABOUT BILL MOYERS, AND THAT BILL'S
PROGRAM REPRESENTED A LIBERAL OR PROGRESSIVE POINT OF VIEW
PRETTY FREQUENTLY.

BUT THERE ARE OTHER PBS PROGRAMS.

JOHN McLAUGHLIN WAS ONCE THE EDITOR OF THE "NATIONAL
REVIEW," PROUD CONSERVATIVE.

HE'S HOSTED "THE McLAUGHLIN GROUP" FOR YEARS.

>>Paula Kerger: FOR YEARS.

AND I THINK PART OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO PUBLIC BROADCASTING
IS, IN FACT, REFLECTIVE OF THE TIMES THAT WE LIVE IN.

I THINK THAT WE DO LIVE IN SUCH A CHARGED PARTISAN TIME,
WHERE PEOPLE REALLY LOOK AT THE WORK THAT WE BROADCAST, THAT
OTHER MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS BROADCAST, AND IF THEY SEE THEIR
OWN POINT OF VIEW REFLECTED, THEN, OBVIOUSLY, WE'RE GETTING
IT RIGHT.

AND IF THEY SEE ANOTHER'S POINT OF VIEW, THEN OBVIOUSLY WE
MUST BE GETTING IT WRONG.

BEFORE I CAME INTO THIS JOB, I WAS THE GENERAL MANAGER AND
COO OF OUR STATION IN NEW YORK, WNET.

ONE OF THE THINGS I USED TO DO IN THE MORNING WHEN I WOULD
COME INTO THE OFFICE IS I WOULD LISTEN TO THE PHONE CALLS

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THAT WE WOULD GET OVERNIGHT FROM VIEWERS, AND I WOULD LOOK AT THE E-MAILS THAT CAME IN.

AND SOMETIMES I WOULD WONDER IF PEOPLE WERE WATCHING THE SAME SHOW.

YOU KNOW, I WOULD LOOK AT A RESPONSE TO A "NewsHour" BROADCAST, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THINK THESE PEOPLE COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN WATCHING THE SAME SHOW.

BECAUSE ON ONE HAND, PEOPLE WERE ACCUSING US OF BEING TOO CONSERVATIVE IN THE WAY THAT WE WERE COVERING A STORY.

OTHERS THOUGHT WE WERE BEING TOO LIBERAL IN THE WAY THAT WE WERE COVERING THE STORY.

AND IF I GOT CALLS FROM BOTH SIDES DURING THE SAME BROADCAST, THEN, CLEARLY, WE WERE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT BECAUSE WE HAD UPSET EVERYONE.

>>Rob Lorei: NOW, THE "NewsHour" REALLY SEEMS TO BE SCRUPULOUS ABOUT PROVIDING BALANCE.

>>Paula Kerger: YES.

>>Rob Lorei: THAT IF YOU LOOK AT THE ISSUES, YOU'LL USUALLY HAVE -- THAT THEY DISCUSS, YOU USUALLY HAVE A CONSERVATIVE AND A LIBERAL DISCUSSING THE ISSUE.

ARE WE LOCKED INTO, THOUGH -- I MEAN, IS THAT THE ONLY WAY TO LOOK AT THINGS?

ARE WE LOCKED INTO, WELL, THERE'S A LIBERAL SIDE AND A CONSERVATIVE SIDE?

DOES BALANCE WITH TWO POSITIONS ALWAYS ANSWER THE KIND OF

WAY THAT WE SHOULD FRAME THESE ISSUES?

>>Paula Kerger: WELL, I THINK -- YOU KNOW, OBVIOUSLY, WE DO SPEND A LOT OF TIME THINKING ABOUT HOW WE MAKE SURE THAT WE HAVE VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS REPRESENTED ON OUR AIR.

AND IN SOME CASES, I THINK PROGRAMS THAT WE PRODUCE MAY REPRESENT A SINGULAR POINT OF VIEW, AND OTHERS REPRESENT MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEW.

AND I THINK WHAT I TRY TO LOOK AT AS I LOOK AT OUR BROADCAST SCHEDULE AND NEWS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS IS WE LOOK AT THE COMPLETE SPECTRUM ACROSS THE SCHEDULE.

I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

I THINK IT'S SOMETIMES DIFFICULT, PARTICULARLY WITH A DOCUMENTARY THAT HAS A SPECIFIC POINT OF VIEW TO MAKE SURE THAT THAT SINGLE PROGRAM REPRESENTS ALL OF THE VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON AN ISSUE.

AND SO I THINK THAT IF IN THE WORK THAT WE DO, IF WE'RE ABLE TO TRY TO BRING FORWARD DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ACROSS THE SCHEDULE, THAT REALLY IS THE WAY THAT WE ACHIEVE WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO, WHICH IS TO TRY TO GENERATE ENGAGED CONVERSATION IN THIS COUNTRY.

I THINK THE "NewsHour," THROUGH ITS WORK, REALLY TRIES TO PUT CONTEXT TO ISSUES.

IT REALLY TRIES TO REPRESENT THE VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE.

AND WITHIN THAT SINGLE HOUR EVERY NIGHT, WHICH I THINK SO

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MANY OF US RELY ON IN THE NATION EVERY NIGHT, IT TRIES TO
FRAME THOSE FOR US, SO THAT WE CAN IN THESE VERY COMPLEX
TIMES TRY TO MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD AROUND US.

>>Rob Lorei: YOU KNOW, WE NEVER TALK ABOUT IT, BUT WHAT KIND
OF RATINGS DOES A PROGRAM LIKE THE "NewsHour" HAVE?

HOW DOES IT DO AROUND THE COUNTRY?

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO VIEWERS IN THE U.S.?

>>Paula Kerger: IT'S TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT TO VIEWERS IN
THE U.S.

I THINK PEOPLE SOMETIMES LOOK AT A PROGRAM LIKE THE
"NewsHour," AND THEY THINK, WELL, THAT DOES WELL, BUT CNN
MUST DO SO MUCH BETTER.

THE RATINGS FOR THE "NewsHour" ARE SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER
THAN THOSE FOR CNN OR ANY OF THE OTHER CABLE SHOWS.

SO IT HAS A VERY SIGNIFICANT, A VERY LOYAL AUDIENCE.

I THINK SOMETIMES PEOPLE HAVE THIS NOTION OF WHO WATCHES
PROGRAMS LIKE THE "NewsHour."

THEY THINK THAT PERHAPS IT'S SOMEONE THAT IS SITTING IN A
DEN SOMEWHERE WEARING A -- WELL, THEY WOULDN'T BE WEARING A
HEAVY SWEATER HERE IN FLORIDA, BUT CERTAINLY WOULD BE
PUFFING ON A PIPE OR SOMETHING.

AND I THINK IF YOU LOOK AT THE AUDIENCE OF THE "NewsHour,"
YOU SEE THE CROSS SECTION OF THIS COUNTRY.

YOU SEE PEOPLE THAT ARE OF EVERY DIFFERENT RACE AND
SOCIOECONOMIC GROUP, RICH, POOR, WATCHES THE "NewsHour"

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AND REALLY VALUES THE WORK THAT IT REPRESENTS.

IT TENDS TO HAVE A LARGER AUDIENCE OF PEOPLE THAT I WOULD REFER TO AS INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY.

AND THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THOSE THAT ARE CORPORATE CEOs.

WHAT IT MEANS ARE TEACHERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS, PEOPLE THAT ARE ENGAGED THAT CARE A LOT ABOUT THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY LIVE AND WORK AND PLAY.

AND THOSE PEOPLE TEND TO WATCH THE "NewsHour" AT SLIGHTLY HIGHER PERCENTAGE THAN OTHERS, BUT IT GETS A WIDE CROSS SECTION OF PEOPLE.

I TRAVEL AROUND A LOT OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS SINCE I'VE BEEN IN THIS JOB, AND I MEET PEOPLE OF ALL WALKS OF LIFE THAT REALLY VALUE THE WORK THAT WE TRY TO PUT ON THE AIR EVERY SINGLE DAY.

>>Rob Lorei: ONE THING I THINK THAT IS NOT OFTEN SAID, TOO, IS THAT THERE ARE REALLY KIND OF TWO CLASSES OF VIEWERS IN THE COUNTRY.

THERE ARE THOSE VIEWERS WHO CAN AFFORD CABLE, THOSE VIEWERS WHO CAN AFFORD SATELLITE, AND THOSE VIEWERS -- THREE CLASSES -- THOSE VIEWERS WHO CANNOT.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS AVAILABLE ON FREE TELEVISION TO, I IMAGINE, MOST OF THE HOMES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, RIGHT?

>>Paula Kerger: WE COVER THE ENTIRE COUNTRY.

AND THE THING THAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT THE COMMENT THAT YOU

JUST MADE, THERE'S ABOUT 20 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT WATCH OVER-THE-AIR TELEVISION EXCLUSIVELY. AND SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE THAT CAN'T AFFORD CABLE OR SATELLITE TELEVISION. SOME OF THEM ARE IN PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE CABLE IS NOT AVAILABLE. IN RURAL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, FOR EXAMPLE, OVER-THE-AIR IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT. BUT THERE ARE ALSO A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT CAN AFFORD SATELLITE OR CABLE TELEVISION AND CHOOSE NOT TO BECAUSE THEIR MEDIA CONSUMPTION NEEDS ARE MET BY OVER-THE-AIR TELEVISION. AND THIS IS A REALLY IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR US RIGHT NOW, BECAUSE IN JUST A LITTLE MORE THAN 420 DAYS FROM NOW, THE OVER-THE-AIR TELEVISION BROADCAST, AS WE KNOW IT, CEASES. AND IT WILL BE REPLACED FULLY BY DIGITAL TELEVISION BROADCAST. AND SO WHAT THAT MEANS TO VIEWERS THAT WATCH TELEVISION OVER THE AIR IS THAT IF YOU HAVE A NEW DIGITAL SET, YOU ACTUALLY DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING. YOU'LL GET THESE NEW CHANNELS. YOU'LL GET YOUR REGULAR TELEVISION THE WAY THAT YOU'VE ALWAYS GOTTEN IT. BUT IF YOU HAVE AN OLD SET, IF YOU HAVE A SET WITH THOSE RABBIT EARS, EVEN IF IT'S NOT YOUR FIRST SET THAT'S HOOKED INTO CABLE, BUT YOU HAVE GOT IT IN THE KITCHEN OR IF YOU'VE

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GOT IT IN THE BEDROOM OR THE EXTRA DEN OR THE BASEMENT OR THE GARAGE OR WHEREVER IT IS THAT YOU HAVE THESE EXTRA SETS, YOU NEED TO DO SOMETHING, WHICH IS YOU NEED TO GET A LITTLE CONVERTER BOX THAT YOU PLUG INTO THE BACK OF YOUR SET. YOU'LL STILL GET FREE OVER-THE-AIR TELEVISION, BUT YOUR OLD TELEVISIONS WON'T WORK AFTER FEBRUARY 2009 UNLESS YOU GET THAT LITTLE BOX.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BEGINNING IN JANUARY, STARTED ISSUING COUPONS.

BOXES RUN ABOUT \$40.

YOU CAN GET A COUPON FOR \$40, WHICH FOR EVERY HOUSEHOLD, YOU CAN GET TWO BOXES FOR FREE.

AND YOU'LL CONTINUE TO WATCH FREE OVER-THE-AIR TELEVISION.

>>Rob Lorei: NOW, DIGITAL, WHEN WE START DIGITAL ACROSS THE COUNTRY FOR EVERYBODY, THAT MEANS THAT THERE WILL BE NOT JUST ONE CHANNEL WHERE YOUR LOCAL PBS STATION IS OR YOUR LOCAL COMMERCIAL STATION IS, BUT THERE WILL BE MULTIPLE CHANNELS.

WILL THE PEOPLE WHO BUY THESE BOXES BE ABLE TO PICK UP THESE NEW CHANNELS?

>>Paula Kerger: YES, THEY WILL.

THE THING THAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT THESE CHANNELS, THIS IS A LITTLE BIT LIKE THE WAY THAT TELEVISION MIGRATED FROM BLACK AND WHITE TO COLOR.

THIS IS HOW I ALWAYS TRY TO EXPLAIN IT.

BUT IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT IN THAT RATHER THAN -- YOU KNOW, FOR MANY YEARS, IF YOU HAD AN OLD BLACK-AND-WHITE SET, YOU COULD WATCH ALL THE COLOR CHANNELS WITHOUT HAVING TO DO ANYTHING.

BECAUSE OF THE TECHNOLOGY HERE, YOU CAN STILL USE YOUR OLD SET.

YOU JUST NEED THIS LITTLE CONVERTER BOX THAT PLUGS INTO THE BACK.

IT'S NOT A CABLE BOX.

PEOPLE SOMETIMES GET CONFUSED, AND THEY THINK, OH, I MUST GET CABLE.

IT'S NOT.

IT'S A LITTLE CONVERTER BOX THAT PLUGS IN.

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO WATCH WEDU, BUT YOU'LL ALSO BE ABLE TO WATCH THE OTHER MULTI-CAST CHANNELS THAT WEDU IS BROADCASTING RIGHT NOW.

I KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT ONE OF THE CHANNELS THAT WEDU IS BROADCASTING IS V-me, WHICH IS A 24-HOUR SPANISH LANGUAGE CHANNEL, SO YOU'LL BE ABLE TO WATCH THAT, AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO WATCH THE CHANNELS WITH REALLY GREAT CLARITY.

YOU KNOW, AGAIN, WITH YOUR OLD ANALOG SET, YOU'D HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF THAT GHOSTING AND A LITTLE BIT OF THE -- YOU KNOW, THE SIGNAL SOMETIMES WASN'T REALLY CLEAR, A LITTLE FUZZINESS.

THIS NEW DIGITAL BROADCAST, WHICH IS WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAS

CHANGED THE WHOLE BROADCAST STANDARD, IS VERY CLEAR AND, YOU KNOW, VERY CRISP IMAGES.

SO YOUR OLD SET WILL ACTUALLY LOOK PRETTY GOOD.

SO DON'T THROW THAT OLD SET AWAY.

JUST GET A LITTLE BOX, AND YOU'LL BE ALL SET.

>>Rob Lorei: I WANT TO GO BACK TO THIS QUESTION OF THE RELEVANCY OF PBS.

AND THAT IS THAT, YOU KNOW, THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT SAY WITH ALL THE NATURE CHANNELS ON CABLE, WITH THE HISTORY CHANNEL ON CABLE AND SATELLITE, WITH THINGS LIKE C-SPAN ON CABLE, THAT PBS HAS LOST ITS RELEVANCE, THAT THE KIND OF THINGS THAT PBS PIONEERED -- THE WATERGATE HEARINGS WERE CARRIED ON PBS.

>>Paula Kerger: THAT'S RIGHT.

>>Rob Lorei: -- IN THE 1970s.

>>Paula Kerger: THAT'S RIGHT.

>>Rob Lorei: THAT THE RELEVANCE OF PBS IS LESS TODAY BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT ALL THESE OTHER CHANNELS OUT THERE.

>>Paula Kerger: WELL, PEOPLE WILL SOMETIMES SAY THAT TO ME, AND SOMETIMES I ASK PEOPLE THAT MAKE THOSE COMMENTS IF THEY ARE ACTUALLY WATCHING TELEVISION.

BECAUSE, YEAH, THERE ARE LOTS OF CHANNELS FOR THOSE THAT HAVE CABLE.

BY THE WAY, THAT TIES INTO THE ISSUE THAT WE WERE JUST TALKING ABOUT.

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FOR 20 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS IN THIS COUNTRY, THAT'S NOT AN
OPTION.

SO NONE OF THOSE OTHER CHANNELS THAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT
ARE REALLY ACCESSIBLE TO PEOPLE WITHOUT CABLE.

SAY YOU DO HAVE CABLE.

SAY YOU HAVE 500 CHANNELS, WHAT'S ACTUALLY ON THOSE 500
CHANNELS?

YES, THERE'S THE HISTORY CHANNEL.

THERE'S DISCOVERY.

THERE'S THE LEARNING CHANNEL.

THERE'S THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT CHANNEL.

BUT IF YOU LOOK VERY CAREFULLY AT THE PROGRAMMING THAT'S ON
THOSE CHANNELS, IT'S DIFFERENT THAN WHAT PUBLIC TELEVISION
REPRESENTS.

AND THAT'S BECAUSE THOSE CHANNELS ARE COMMERCIAL CHANNELS.

AND I WANT TO VERY QUICKLY ADD, THERE'S A LOT OF GREAT
TELEVISION ON COMMERCIAL CHANNELS, BUT IF YOU START OUT WITH
DOING WORK WHERE YOU KNOW IN THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD YOU'VE
GOT TO DELIVER A PROFIT TO A SHAREHOLDER, IT TAKES YOU DOWN
A VERY DIFFERENT PATH THAN IF YOU START DOING PROGRAMMING
THAT YOU KNOW AT ITS HEART IS GOING TO SERVE THE PUBLIC.

SO, FOR EXAMPLE, LET'S LOOK AT THE ARTS AS I THINK REALLY
THE BEST POSSIBLE EXAMPLE.

THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT CHANNEL, WHICH MAYBE SOME OF YOU
ARE WATCHING THIS PROGRAM THINKING, ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT,

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WHAT CHANNEL IS THAT?

IT'S A & E.

WELL, A & E DOESN'T EVEN CALL ITSELF ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT ANYMORE BECAUSE THERE ARE NO LONGER ARTS PROGRAMMING ON THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT CHANNEL.

IT'S "CSI," AND IT'S "THE SOPRANOS" AND OTHER PROGRAMS LIKE THAT.

THE NEXT CHANNEL THAT TRIED TO PICK UP THE MANTLE OF BRINGING ARTS PROGRAMMING TO THIS COUNTRY THROUGH CABLE WAS BRAVO.

IT STARTED OUT WITH A LOT OF ARTS PROGRAMMING, A LOT OF CONCERTS AND RECITALS AND SO FORTH.

BUT NOT TOO LONG INTO ITS EXISTENCE, THE PROGRAM EXECUTIVES REALIZED THAT THEY WEREN'T ABLE TO MAKE THE MONEY ON BRAVO DOING THAT KIND OF PROGRAMMING.

AND THEY MIGRATED INTO A VERY DIFFERENT GENRE OF PROGRAMMING IN THE REALITY SHOWS.

PROGRAMS LIKE "TOP CHEF," AND "PROJECT RUNWAY" AND SO FORTH.

I THINK THEY ARE WONDERFUL PROGRAMS.

I ACTUALLY HAPPEN TO WATCH THEM A GREAT DEAL.

BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ARTS PROGRAMS THAT ONE THINKS OF WHEN ONE THINKS OF, FOR EXAMPLE, GREAT PERFORMANCES IN THE METROPOLITAN OPERA BROADCAST AND THE KIND OF WORK WE DO IN PUBLIC TELEVISION.

SO I THINK THAT THERE IS A PLACE IN THE BROADCAST LANDSCAPE

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FOR ALL OF US.

AND I THINK THAT THE WORK THAT PUBLIC TELEVISION HAS DONE, THE HIGH-QUALITY CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING, THE THOUGHTFUL ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMS LIKE THE "NewsHour" REPRESENTS, FRANKLY, THE WORK EVEN THAT KEN BURNS DOES.

KEN BURNS COULD GO TO CABLE TELEVISION, I THINK, BUT HE CHOOSES NOT TO BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT EVEN AS WONDERFUL A FILMMAKER AS HE IS, THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION WOULD PUT RESTRICTIONS ON HIM AND WOULD CONSTRAIN THE WORK THAT HE'S DOING SO THAT HE WOULDN'T HAVE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE 15 HOURS THAT IT TOOK HIM TO TELL THE STORY OF WORLD WAR II THAT JUST BROADCAST ON OUR MEMBER STATIONS OVER THIS FALL.

>>Rob Lorei: UM-HUM.

I KNOW AN AREA YOU ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT IS FUNDING AND FUNDING FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

BREAK IT DOWN FOR US.

FOR THOSE OF US THAT DON'T KNOW WHERE PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND LOCAL STATIONS LIKE WEDU GET THEIR MONEY FROM, BREAK IT DOWN FOR US.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS, CORPORATE UNDERWRITING, MONEY FROM THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING, AND EXPLAIN TO US WHAT CPB IS.

>>Paula Kerger: RIGHT.

WELL, IT'S -- WE ARE A LITTLE CONFUSING ANIMAL.

I THINK SOMETIMES PEOPLE AREN'T QUITE SURE WHERE OUR MONEY

COMES FROM.

WE GET 15%, THAT'S 1-5, PERCENT OF OUR RESOURCES COME FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

AND THAT COMES TO OUR MEMBER STATIONS THROUGH THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING, WHICH IS A SORT OF QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY THAT WAS CREATED IN ORDER TO FUNNEL THE MONEY THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATES FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION AND PUBLIC RADIO TO STATIONS.

IT WAS CREATED REALLY AS A MECHANISM TO DISTRIBUTE THE MONEY BUT ALSO AS A HEAT SHIELD SO THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, IF WE DO PROGRAMS THAT MAY MAKE SOME PEOPLE UNHAPPY, FOR EXAMPLE, THE WATERGATE HEARINGS.

THERE WAS A CALL AFTER THE WATERGATE HEARINGS TO ELIMINATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING, AND HAVING THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING AS THAT HEAT SHIELD IS TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT.

AND THEN ABOUT HALF OF OUR MONEY IN PUBLIC BROADCASTING, ACTUALLY MORE THAN HALF, COMES FROM INDIVIDUALS, VIEWERS LIKE YOU.

AND DEPENDING UPON THE STATION, IT MAY BE A LITTLE MORE THAN THAT OR A LITTLE LESS.

IT REALLY VARIES VERY MUCH STATION BY STATION.

ABOUT A THIRD OF OUR MONEY COMES FROM CORPORATIONS.

THE REST COMES FROM FOUNDATIONS.

SO THAT'S REALLY ROUGHLY THE MIX.

BUT IT VARIES.

THE WAY THAT THE FEDERAL APPROPRIATION COMES INTO EACH PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION IS BASED ON A FORMULA THAT'S CALCULATED BASED ON THE SIZE OF THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES, WHETHER IT'S A SINGLE PUBLIC BROADCASTING STATION IN A RURAL MARKET, FOR EXAMPLE.

THE PROPORTION OF GOVERNMENT MONEY IN THAT CASE MIGHT BE LARGER.

SO, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE SOME STATIONS IN ALASKA THAT NOT ONLY ARE THE ONLY PUBLIC TELEVISION STATION IN PARTS OF THE STATE, THEY ARE THE ONLY TELEVISION STATION IN THE STATE, IN THAT PART OF THE STATE.

AND THOSE STATIONS TEND TO GET A MUCH LARGER FEDERAL PERCENTAGE OF MONEY BECAUSE THERE AREN'T THE INDIVIDUALS THERE TO ACTUALLY FILL IN.

AND ONE OF THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS UNIVERSAL SERVICE.

IN STATIONS LIKE MY OLD STATION IN NEW YORK, PROBABLY ABOUT 7% OF THAT STATION'S BUDGET ACTUALLY WAS FEDERAL APPROPRIATION.

ALL THE REST OF IT WAS INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT AND CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT BECAUSE THE DONOR BASE THERE WAS SO MUCH STRONGER.

THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY STATION HERE.

AND THE PEOPLE IN THIS COMMUNITY SHOULD BE SO VERY PROUD

THAT WEDU IS IN YOUR BACKYARD, BECAUSE THIS IS A STATION THAT IS VERY DEEPLY CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY, HAS A VERY DEEP CONNECTION TO LOCAL PROGRAMS.

AND, YOU KNOW, IN MOST PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, THE PUBLIC TELEVISION, PUBLIC RADIO STATIONS ARE THE ONLY LOCALLY OWNED BROADCASTER LEFT IN THE COMMUNITY.

AND SO TO HAVE A STATION LIKE WEDU HERE THAT REALLY IS SPENDING ALL OF ITS TIME THINKING ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF THIS WONDERFUL COMMUNITY AND HOW BEST TO SERVE THEM AND TO THEN DO PROGRAMS LIKE THIS, TO DO PROGRAMS LIKE THE DOCUMENTARIES THAT YOU BROADCAST -- I KNOW THAT YOU JUST WON TWO EMMYS. THAT'S A MARK OF REALLY SIGNIFICANT QUALITY PROGRAMMING.

>>Rob Lorei: YOU KNOW, THERE'S A LOT OF DIFFERENT DISTRIBUTION MODES OUT THERE.

THE INTERNET, I THINK, MAY BE COMING ON AS A DISTRIBUTION MODE FOR ALL SORTS OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS.

DO YOU EVER FORESEE A DAY WHERE PEOPLE WILL GO DIRECTLY TO THE PBS.ORG WEB SITE, WATCH PROGRAMS THERE AT PBS, BYPASS THE LOCAL STATIONS, SO LOCAL STATIONS BECOME IRRELEVANT? WHERE IS THAT HEADED?

>>Paula Kerger: WELL, YOU KNOW, THAT'S A REALLY GREAT QUESTION BECAUSE ONE OF THE ISSUES THAT WE'RE GRAPPLING WITH RIGHT NOW IS THIS WHOLE MEDIA LANDSCAPE CHANGES, AND YOU'RE ABLE TO WATCH TELEVISION ON A COMPUTER OR ON AN IPOD OR ON A CELL PHONE, YOU KNOW, SO MANY DIFFERENT MECHANISMS AND

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ALSO DISTRIBUTION IN PLACES LIKE YOUTUBE, WHICH, YOU KNOW, STARTED OUT, OF COURSE, WITH LOTS OF CONTENT THAT WAS CREATED BY INDIVIDUALS, AND NOW MORE AND MORE PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED CONTENT IS SHOWING UP IN PLACES LIKE YOUTUBE.

SO WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO IS REALLY LOOK AT THE FACT THAT PEOPLE WANT TO ACCESS CONTENT WHEN THEY WANT IT AND WHERE THEY WANT IT.

AND YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO SERVE THEIR NEEDS.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, YOU ALSO WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE LOCAL STATIONS, BECAUSE I THINK THAT'S WHAT MAKES US SO DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER BROADCASTER IS THE POWER OF HAVING A LOCAL MEDIA PRESENCE IN A COMMUNITY.

AND SO WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO AS WE LOOK AT THE FUTURE IS, YES, LOOK AT ALL THOSE NEW PLATFORMS, BUT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE LOCAL STATION IS A PART OF THE EQUATION.

SO WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON RIGHT NOW, IN FACT, ONE OF THE PRIORITIES FOR US THIS YEAR, IS REALLY LOOKING TO BRING MORE VIDEO CONTENT ONTO OUR WEB SITES, BUT TO DO THAT THROUGH OUR LOCAL STATIONS.

SO THAT WHAT WE WOULD PREFER VIEWERS TO DO IS TO COME IN THROUGH WEDU.ORG, AND, YES, YOU MAY BE WATCHING SOME OF THE PROGRAMS THAT WE WILL STREAM THROUGH THE PBS.ORG STRUCTURE, BUT YOU WANT TO STAY CONNECTED TO WEDU.ORG, BECAUSE LIKE THE LOCAL STATION, YOU'RE GETTING NATIONAL CONTENT, BUT WEDU PUTS IT INTO A LOCAL CONTEXT.

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AND I THINK THAT PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN REALLY THINKING ABOUT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND WHAT IS IMPORTANT OUT OF THE NATIONAL STORY THAT RELATES LOCALLY, WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THAT ON AN ONLINE SPACE LIKE WE DO ON A BROADCAST SPACE.

>>Rob Lorei: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE LOCAL STATIONS, LIKE WEDU OR LIKE WNET, THE STATION THAT YOU CAME FROM, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THEY TO PRODUCING THAT NATIONAL PROGRAMMING THAT WE SEE ON PBS?

>>Paula Kerger: THAT'S ALSO A GREAT QUESTION BECAUSE, ACTUALLY, THIS IS THE OTHER THING THAT MAKES US DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER BROADCASTER.

I ACTUALLY DON'T PRODUCE ANYTHING.

ALL OF THE PRODUCTION THAT I PUT ON TO PUBLIC BROADCASTING THROUGH PBS COMES THROUGH LOCAL STATIONS.

SO IT COMES THROUGH STATIONS LIKE WEDU OR WNET OR WGBH IN BOSTON OR WETA IN WASHINGTON.

AND I THINK THAT BEING ABLE TO TAP INTO THE CREATIVITY FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY THAT COMES IN THROUGH THE MEMBER STATIONS IS WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT.

WE'RE NOT A NETWORK.

AND I THINK MOST PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT PBS IS.

AND I'M NOT RUNNING A CABLE ORGANIZATION NOR A NATIONAL MEDIA EMPIRE.

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WHAT I AM RUNNING IS THE MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATION FOR OUR 348
MEMBER STATIONS.

AND SO THOSE STATIONS CREATED PBS AS A WAY TO ACHIEVE SCALE,
TO CREATE WORK THAT A SINGLE TELEVISION STATION WOULDN'T BE
ABLE TO DO ON ITS OWN.

EVEN A VERY LARGE STATION LIKE MY OLD STATION IN NEW YORK
WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CREATE ON ITS OWN, THE "NewsHour,"
"BILL MOYERS," "NATURE," "NOVA," "MASTERPIECE THEATRE,"
"GREAT PERFORMANCES."

BUT IF THEY WORKING TOGETHER WITH STATIONS AROUND THE
COUNTRY CAN COMBINE RESOURCES, WE CAN CREATE THAT KIND OF
WORK.

SO PBS WAS CREATED TO BUILD A PROGRAM SCHEDULE BASED ON
COMBINING THE RESOURCES OF ALL OF OUR STATIONS AROUND THE
COUNTRY AND WORKING CLOSELY WITH OUR MEMBER STATIONS TO
CREATE THAT CONTENT, ALSO TO CREATE THE SATELLITE
INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ENABLES US TO SHARE PROGRAMS SO THAT YOU
CAN WATCH SOMETHING HERE IN TAMPA, AND YOU CAN ALSO WATCH IT
IN NEW YORK OR BOSTON.

ALSO, TO CREATE PBS.ORG, WHICH IS ONE OF THE LARGEST
DOT-ORGs.

ACTUALLY, I THINK IT'S THE THIRD LARGEST AFTER WIKIPEDIA AND
CRAIG'S LIST.

AND TO CREATE THE KINDS OF EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS THAT
STATIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY USE.

AND SO WE DO A LOT OF WORK DIRECTLY IN THE SCHOOLS.

WE DO A LOT OF WORK WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND TO
CREATE THAT INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ALL STATIONS CAN BENEFIT
FROM IS WHAT PBS REPRESENTS.

>>Rob Lorei: I'M GOING TO DO A LITTLE BIT OF BITING THE HAND
THAT FEEDS US.

THAT IS, SOME FRIENDS OF MINE HAVE WATCHED AS ENHANCED
UNDERWRITING HAS GONE ON PBS STATIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY,
THAT WE'RE NO LONGER JUST TALKING ABOUT ON AIR, THIS PROGRAM
BROUGHT TO YOU BY A GRANT FROM SUCH AND SUCH CORPORATION,
BUT WE'RE SEEING THE ACTUAL CORPORATE PRODUCT KIND OF
EXPLAINED FOR 30 SECONDS OR SO.

I'M WONDERING, YOU KNOW, IS THAT THE BEST MODEL?

YOU SAID EARLIER THAT WE DON'T RELY EXCLUSIVELY.

WE HAVE 50% OR SO VIEWER DONATIONS, BUT THESE CORPORATE
UNDERWRITING ANNOUNCEMENTS MAKE UP A LARGER SHARE OF
FUNDING.

MY FRIENDS SAY WHY CAN'T WE GO DO SOMETHING LIKE THE BBC,
WHERE PEOPLE PAY FOR A LICENSE FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION
STATION AND HAVE A POLITICAL -- OR A WALL BETWEEN THE
FUNDING SOURCE AND GOVERNMENT, THAT THE MONEY WILL ALWAYS BE
THERE.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT OUR CURRENT FUNDING MODEL FOR PUBLIC
BROADCASTING?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE BBC MODEL?

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

AND DO YOU HAVE OTHER IDEAS?

>>Paula Kerger: WELL, YOU KNOW, IT'S INTERESTING, BECAUSE WHEN YOU LOOK AT OTHER PUBLIC BROADCASTERS AROUND THE WORLD, YOU KNOW, THE BBC IS PROBABLY THE BEST EXAMPLE. AND IT IS -- BBC IS FUNDED ON THE ANNUAL TAX ON TELEVISION SETS.

AND IT'S FUNDED MANY TIMES GREATER THAN PUBLIC BROADCASTING. AND I WOULD ARGUE THAT THIS IS A BIGGER, MORE COMPLEX COUNTRY THAN THE U.K., AND THERE ARE MOMENTS THAT I WILL ADMIT THAT I THINK TO MYSELF HOW REALLY EXTRAORDINARY IT WOULD BE IF WE HAD THE RESOURCES OF THE BBC IN ORDER TO SERVE THIS COUNTRY.

SO, YES, I'M ALWAYS INTERESTED IN TRYING TO CONSIDER WAYS THAT WE COULD INCREASE THE FEDERAL APPROPRIATION BECAUSE THAT WOULD TAKE SOME PRESSURES OFF OF HAVING TO RAISE THE MONEY, BUT I HONESTLY THINK THAT THE FACT THAT WE RECEIVE SOME FEDERAL MONEY AND THEN WE MATCH THAT WITH LOCAL PHILANTHROPY AND CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS AND FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIPS ACTUALLY MAKES US A RICHER SERVICE BECAUSE WE STAY VERY TIED TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE SERVE.

AND THE BBC, AS POWERFUL AS IT IS, IS STILL VERY MUCH OF A NATIONAL BROADCASTER.

AND WE ARE VERY LOCAL.

AND I THINK THAT'S WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT, BECAUSE THIS COUNTRY IS SO DIVERSE.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

WE SHARE SO MANY THINGS IN COMMON, BUT THERE ARE REGIONAL DIFFERENCES.

THERE ARE COMMUNITY DIFFERENCES.

AND TO HAVE A BROADCASTER THAT'S REALLY THINKING ABOUT THAT I THINK IS IMPORTANT.

ON THE CORPORATE SIDE, YES, THERE WAS A DAY WHEN WE COULD JUST PUT UP A BLUE CARD WITH WHITE LETTERING AND THANK AN UNDERWRITER AND EVERYONE WAS HAPPY.

AND NOW CORPORATIONS, IN ALL OF THEIR PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIPS, ACTUALLY, IF YOU'RE INVOLVED WITH ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION, YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU'RE DOING AN EVENT AND YOU'RE INVOLVED WITH A CAR, A CAR DEALER OR CAR MANUFACTURER THAT'S AN UNDERWRITER, THE CAR IS USUALLY SITTING IN FRONT OF THE EVENT THAT NIGHT.

SO I THINK THAT CORPORATIONS AS THEY'RE RESPONSIVE TO THEIR STOCKHOLDERS, AND THEY ARE LOOKING AT THEIR PARTNERSHIPS WITH PUBLIC TELEVISION AND OTHER NONPROFITS AS MORE OF A MARKETING INVESTMENT, NOT JUST A PHILANTHROPIC GIFT.

YES, WE ARE HAVING TO MAKE VERY HARD DECISIONS AS WE THINK ABOUT, WHAT DO THOSE PARTNERSHIPS MEAN, AND WHAT IS APPROPRIATE AND WHAT IS INAPPROPRIATE.

THE ONE THING THAT I WILL TELL YOU, THERE IS AN ABSOLUTE FIREWALL BETWEEN ANY CORPORATE INTEREST IN SUPPORTING A PROJECT AND THE PROJECT ITSELF.

AND THE FACT THAT WE DO RECEIVE INDIVIDUAL PHILANTHROPY, AND

THAT'S THE LARGEST PART OF OUR FUNDING, IS, I THINK,
IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THAT IS FURTHER ENCOURAGEMENT THAT WE
MAINTAIN THAT ABSOLUTE FIREWALL.

BECAUSE I THINK ONCE WE VIOLATE THE TRUST OF THE AMERICAN
PUBLIC, WE'RE DONE.

AND WE SHOULD SHUTTER OUR DOORS AND THAT SHOULD BE THE END
OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING.

SO I THINK AS GOOD STEWARDS, THOUGH, OF THE FEDERAL MONEY
THAT COMES IN, IT'S UP TO US TO REALLY LOOK FOR ALL THE
OPPORTUNITIES OF HOW WE CAN BRING RESOURCES IN TO REALLY
MAXIMIZE THE WORK THAT WE'RE ABLE TO PUT ON OUR SCREEN.

>>Rob Lorei: PAULA, THERE'S SO MUCH MORE I WANT TO ASK YOU,
BUT WE'RE OUT OF TIME.

>>Paula Kerger: I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.

THANK YOU.

>>Rob Lorei: PAULA KERGER, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

>>Paula Kerger: WONDERFUL TO MEET YOU.

>>Rob Lorei: AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING THE "WEDU
INTERVIEW."

I'M ROB LOREI.

GOOD NIGHT.

REALTIME CAPTIONING BY AMERICAPTION, INC.

